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Surfer Taj Burrow and musician John Butler join fight against \$70m Gnarabup resort



Kim Macdonald | The West Australian
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Kim Macdonald



Inset, musician John Butler, and main, the site of the proposed resort. Credit: The West Australian

Celebrities have joined a fight with Margaret River locals to raise millions to stop a five-star resort being built at Gnarabup.

Surfer Taj Burrow, musicians John Butler and Mama Kin, and chef Ian Parmenter are among those set to rally against the proposed \$70 million resort, which they say will disrupt the quiet and natural beach vibe and risk the fragile coast.

Local protest group Preserve Gnarabup has applied to the council to change the zoning from tourism to a public reserve, which would prevent private development.

Member Clare Gleeson, a lawyer, said if successful the rezoning would trigger compensation to the developer Luke Saraceni, who wants to build a 120-room Westin Hotel.



Property developer Luke Saraceni. Credit: Megan Powell/The West Australian

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Mr Gleeson said locals were seeking to raise funds to ensure the council did not refuse the zoning amendment on financial grounds, given it had no money set aside for it.

She claimed compensation would be worth about \$5.5 million – the amount Mr Saraceni paid for it – because State planning law did not consider lost future earnings.

A rally to be held in Margaret River tomorrow will highlight the proposal's risk to the environment, and will include WA's most famous retired surfer.

"If it goes ahead, it will change the feel of the place forever," Mr Burrow told a surfing magazine.



Australian surfing champ Taj Burrow with Arabella Rose Burrow. Credit: Ian Munro/The West Australian

Mr Saraceni said he was confident the land would not be rezoned, claiming it would be a waste of public money.

If it was, he believed compensation would need to be more than \$30 million under the injurious affection clause.

Mr Saraceni said there was already some development in the area, and it had not destroyed to environment.

"They are talking about land that some of these protestors currently live in themselves," he said.

He urged protestors to wait for architectural plans before objecting, claiming they were sympathetic to the environment, and would help promote the region across the world.



Ian Parmenter at home in Margaret River. Credit: Astrid Volzke/WA News

Shire president Ian Earl said a zoning change was a long and complicated process that would ultimately depend on a decision by planning minister Rita Saffioti. Ms Saffioti was on leave and unable to comment.

The parcel of land includes an area that will be assessed as an Aboriginal Heritage site.

"We would urge the developer to undertake consultation with the Working Party about their plans and to engage in a respectful discussion with traditional owners about what it is they intend to do," said a spokesperson from the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council.

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